Methodologies to Implement

in the ELL Classroom

Students, regardless of experience, usually feel some apprehension when placed in unfamiliar situations. I can’t imagine the angst that an ELL student must feel upon entering a new classroom in a different country. It is important, as a teacher, to understand the concerns of new students and to be prepared to meet the needs of these students. It is also important, as a person, to empathize with these students as they run the gamut of emotions connected with their experiences.

There are a multitude of methodologies that can be implemented in the classroom to aid ELL students with learning, comprehension, and even socialization with peers. Whatever the ultimate goal may be for a specific lesson, it is important to have routines for all students, and especially for ELLs. Establishing routines helps create predictable environments in which students feel a level of comfort. The greater the level of comfort a student feels, the more likely he/she is willing to participate and take risks with learning.

Besides establishing routines, it is important for ELL students to have several opportunities to work in collaborative groups with peers. This peer interaction helps build both BICS and CALP. These kinds of activities can manifest as graffiti walls, finder sheet activities, and several other kinesthetic and visual strategies. The use of realia can also help the ELL student give meaning to words via the visual and tangible aspect of the materials used. Regardless of the strategy being used, it is imperative that teachers try to keep lessons and information within the student’s ZPD. The information that is being received by the ELL must be understood (comprehensible input) in order for learning to proceed and participation to increase (comprehensible output).

It is my perception that all these methodologies apply to all students, not just ELLs. Learning is social and hands on. Learning is also being comfortable making mistakes and having the ability to learn from those mistakes. Learning is not always clean—we have to be willing to play in the dirt to plant the seeds!